(d) by when this modernization work would be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (d) No, Sir. However, World Bank assisted State Health System Projects, pertaining to strengthening and upgradation of secondary health care systems in the states have been approved and completed in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka and Punjab. Such projects in Orissa, Maharastra, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu are under implementation.

Gastric Cancer due to Nitrate

3951. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that over 25 crore people in the country face the risk of contracting gastric cancer and damage in their central nervous and cardio vascular system due to dangerously high levels of nitrate in ground water; and

(b) if so, the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) and (b) As per the WHO Guidelines of Drinking Water Quality, (3rd Edn., Vol. 1, Chapter 12, 2004), the weight of evidence is strongly against there being an association between nitrite and nitrate exposures in humans and the risk of cancer. A conclusive evidenced is yet to be established as regards the relationship between nitrite/nitrate and neurological manifestations. There is slight protective effects of these ions on the cardiovascular systems.

Falling Sex Ratio

3952. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact in their 7th Conference, the All India Democratic Women's Association has expressed concern over the falling sex ratio in the country;

(b) if so, whether the deficit of women in the pupulation is now 36 million in the country;

(c) whether in the UPA's common minimum programme, Government have given certain assurance for betterment of the lot of women; and

(d) if so, the details thereof with action plan of Government to implement these assurances?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. Sex ration (numeber of female per thousand males) has declined over the century from 972 in 1901 to 927 in 1991. The sex ratio has since improved to 933 in 2001. However, as per 2001 census, the difference between male and female population is 35.7 million.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. One of the Assurances in the UPA's Common Minimum Programme is enacting of legislation against gender discrimination. Already in order to check female foeticide, Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 was brought into operation from 1st January, 1996. The Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 has since been amended to make it more comprehensive. The amended Act and Rules came into force with effect from 14.2.2003. The Act prohibits determination and disclosure of the sex of the foetus. Under the Act, use of Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques and genetic counselling is permissible for detection of certain genetic abnormalities.

The violation of the Act is punishable with imprisonment upto 5 years fine upto Rs. 1.00 lakh apart from cancellation of registration and license. The Action Plan of the Government includes creation of awareness against the practice of pre-natal determination of sex through radio, television and print media units. A 'Save the Girl Child' Campaign with a view to lessen son preference by highlighting achievements of young girls has been launched. A National Monitoring and Inspection Committee with representative from National Commission for Women and Department of Women and Child Development has been constituted to take stock of the ground realities by field visits to the problem states. At the same time, sensitization of the Medical Community and Training of Judiciary for better implementation of the Act is being done.